

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

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TOPIC A. Addressing sex tourism

I. Introduction

Sex tourism, one of most prolific criminal industries in the world, is illegal in most countries due to being considered a violation of basic human rights for not complying with people's right to life, liberty, security, freedom of movement, of not being subject of torture or degrading treatment, among others.

This industry has expanded immensely to a point in which it represents around 10% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In effect, it has even surpassed the car industry, which had once been one of the main economic developments (only falls behind drug and weapon trafficking). Likewise, 250,000 tourists travel to other countries for sexual encounters with underage people.¹

Although people travel to countries where sex tourism is legal, they can be tried for such actions in their home country. Besides, within sex tourism, there is something called casual sex, which is legal in almost every country. Among its activities are sex in public, exchange of couples (swinger), hotel, love cruises, among others. On the contrary, illegal sex tourism is related to child pornography and prostitution, as well as human trafficking for sexual intercourse.

¹ El Orden Mundial. (2019). *Detrás del turismo sexual*. Gemma Roquet, Barcelona. From: <https://elordenmundial.com/detras-del-turismo-sexual/>. Retrieved, November 11, 2020.

II. Concept definitions

- Casual sex: Pursuit of a body pleasure primarily via consensual sexual relations without financial payments involved.
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Monetary measurement of the market value related to goods produced and services provided in a country annually.
- Illegal: Action or activity not permitted or required by Law.
- Legal: Action or activity permitted or required by Law.
- Risk factors: Activities that increase the chance of a negative situation of occurring that would not benefit a specific or general population.
- Sex tourism: Travel planned with the sole purpose of buying a service that consists of sexual activity, generally to a destination in which sexual work is legal.
- Sex tourist: Traveller searching for casual sexual activity or bought sexual encounters in a determined destination.
- Slavery: Practice of possessing people against their own will, who are forced through intimidations or any method of violence to conduct and carry out specific activities, generally involving something that goes in opposition to their Human Rights.

III. Current situation

Due to the trending depenalization and society's tolerance of sexual tourism in a variety of countries, more travellers have arisen in recent years. According to a variety of sources, the nations where this activity is the most practised are: The Dominican Republic, Spain, Malaysia, Kenya, Germany, The Netherlands, Philippines, Brazil, Colombia, Thailand, and Cambodia.

These countries represent places where the problem is evident. For example, legal brothels (establishments where prostitution is present) exist in nations such as The Dominican Republic, The Netherlands, Kenya, or Spain. As well, *frauenhäusers* (women houses dedicated to prostitution) have existed in Germany for a long time, continuing to operate currently. Opposite to this, Brazil has a contradictory policy, because brothels are illegal in the country, even though prostitution is legal.

While these are some examples of sexual tourism activity in a variety of countries, it is worrying that businesses and governments have been publicly exposed without punishment. For example, the case of the 2014 billboard in Sao Paulo, Brazil arises as a frontrunner. Days before the World Cup began, an advert presented a woman giving oral sex to a soccer player. It contained a description implying that sexual tourism was a fundamental thing in Brazil.

Another shocking case is the existence of Internet guides, which explain the procedure to meet Cambodian females interested in sexual encounters with tourists, especially in Phnom Penh websites. Also, in Thailand, we can find a travelling agency called “Big Apple Oriental Tours” depicted advertisements promoting sexual tourism in the country.

Now, in the Philippines, sexual tourism involved approximately eight hundred thousand people, including men, women, and children for casual sex work. Besides, it is common to find slogans and pranks (even made by the government) alluding sexual tourism, with the purpose to end with its taboo, which is usually degrading to this industry. Despite this, it is estimated that 40% of American sexual tourists have the Philippines as their main destination for this practice.²

² *Ídem.*

IV. International treaties and initiatives

There is an urgent ongoing situation about this in the world. Because of this, many non-governmental organizations have proposed initiatives to combat and eliminate all criminal cells involved in sexual tourism. Despite this, few countries have decided to apply them, and even they do not penalize those who practice it; ergo, the tourists.

The United Nations Office on Human Rights (OHCHR) has launched the “Blue Heart Campaign”. Created to help the victims, it has the function of fighting sexual tourism and human trafficking in the world. Also, it seeks the direct involvement of civilians and the government to raise awareness and prevent these illegal acts,

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has proposed nine different suggestions to combat sexual tourism in their country and the world, which are:

- Usage of the Operation Predator Smartphone App, which protects mainly children from online sexual predators and their sexual exploitation.
- Use of the Homeland Security Investigations Tip Line to report suspicious activity.
- ICE Submitting Information Online to bring safety for those who need it, starting with the 20,000 laws and agents in more than 400 offices worldwide.
- HHS National Human Trafficking Hotline used for providing security to any crisis survivors could have.
- Raising awareness to society about the indicators of sexual trafficking or tracking training.
- Consciousness about the current situation regarding modern slavery and forced labour.
- Become a mentor for the youth or people in need to avoid gangs and traffickers from targeting them.
- Identification of how to identify human trafficking and to assist victims.
- Offer human trafficking victims legal services, including support for those seeking special immigration status.

V. Key questions

- Why is this problematic relevant? What is the necessity of taking actions against it?
- Should sexual tourism be permitted?
- How is prostitution, forced labour and slavery-related to the topic?
- Which population sector is the most vulnerable to be victims of sexual tourism?
- What are the main causes of sexual tourism?
- Are children profoundly involved in sex trafficking networks?
- According to your delegation's standpoint, what would be the solution to the problematic in the short, medium and long term?
- Why is the OHCHR related to this problematic?
- Has the OHCHR done something to solve this situation?

VI. Sources

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